CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. 1. A method for securing a portable electronic device, comprising:

2.   (a)   generating a security message;

3.   (b)   transmitting said security message to said portable electronic device;

4.   (c)   performing a destructive action on said portable electronic device in response to

5. said security message.

1. 2. The method of claim 1 wherein said destructive action includes erasing memory.

1. 3. The method of claim 1 wherein said destructive action includes destroying a portion of said

2. portable electronic device.

1. 4. The method of claim 1 wherein said destructive action prevents said portable electronic

2. device from transmitting or releasing information.

1. 5. The method of claim 1 wherein (a) includes digitally signing said security message.

1. 6. The method of claim 5 further including the portable electronic device verifying the digital

2. signature.

1. 7. The method of claim 5 using an encryption key to digitally sign the security message.

1   8.   The method of claim 7 wherein said encryption key is stored in an encrypted form before

2   being used to digitally sign the security message.

1   9.   The method of claim 6 wherein a person or entity is authorized to cause (b) to happen and

2   only that person or entity is capable of causing said encrypted key to be decrypted so as to be used

3   to digitally sign the security message.

1   10.   The method of claim 1 wherein (b) occurs after a request has been received to perform the

2   destructive action.

1   11.   The method of claim 10 wherein a person or entity is authorized to cause (b) to happen and

2   (b) occurs after said requesting person or entity is verified.

1   12.   The method of claim 1 further including encrypting the security message and said portable

2   device decrypts the encrypted security message.

1   13.   The method of claim 1 further including digitally signing said security message and

2   including a unique value that changes each time (a) is performed.

1   14.   The method of claim 13 further including receiving said digitally signed security message

2   and authenticating the message using said unique value.

1   15.   The method of claim 13 wherein said unique value includes a time stamp.

1   16.   The method of claim 13 wherein said unique value includes a random number.

1   17.   The method of claim 13 wherein said unique value includes a non-repeating sequence

2   number.

1   18.   The method of claim 1 further including permitting the destructive action to be aborted

2   once the security message is received by said portable electronic device.

1   19.   The method of claim 18 wherein permitting the destructive action to be aborted includes

2   providing the portable electronic device with an abort key that is verified by the portable electronic

3   device.

1   20.   The method of claim 1 further including permitting a specified number of tasks to be

2   performed by the portable electronic device before (c) is performed.

1   21.   The method of claim 1 further including permitting tasks to be performed by said portable

2   electronic device for a specified time period before (c) is performed.

1   22.   The method of claim 1 further including permitting a specified number of tasks to be

2   performed during a specified period of time and performing (c) after either said specified number

3   of tasks have been performed or the specified time period has expired.

1   23.   A portable electronic device, comprising:

2   a CPU;

3   a memory device coupled to said CPU;

4   a decryption key stored in said memory device;

5   an input/output ("I/O") module coupled to said CPU which receives messages from an

6   external security station;

7   wherein said CPU receives security messages from said security station via said I/O

8   module and, in response, performs a destructive action.

1   24.   The portable electronic device of claim 23 wherein said destructive action includes erasing

2   said memory device.

1   25.   The portable electronic device of claim 23 wherein said destructive action prevents said

2   portable electronic device from transmitting information.

1   26.   The portable electronic device of claim 23, wherein said security messages received at said

2   I/O module include a digital signature and said CPU verifies the digital signature.

1   27.   The portable electronic device of claim 26 wherein said CPU uses said decryption key to

2   verify the digital signature.

1   28.   The portable electronic device of claim 23 wherein said CPU verifies a unique value

2   included in said security message, said unique value capable of being different each time the

3   portable electronic device receives a security message.

1   29.   The portable electronic device of claim 28 wherein said CPU authenticates the security

2   message using said unique value.

1   30.   The portable electronic device of claim 28 wherein said unique value includes a time

2   stamp.

1   31.   The portable electronic device of claim 28 wherein said unique value includes a random

2   number.

1   32.   The method of claim 28 wherein said unique value includes a non-repeating sequence

2   number.

1   33.   The portable electronic device of claim 23 wherein said CPU permits the destructive action

2   to be aborted once the security message is received by said portable electronic device.

1   34.   The portable electronic device of claim 33 wherein said CPU permits entry of an abort key

2   to cause the destructive action to be aborted.

1   35.   The portable electronic device of claim 23 wherein said CPU permits a specified number of

2   tasks to be performed by the portable electronic device before performing said destructive action.

1   36.   The portable electronic device of claim 23 wherein said CPU permits tasks to be performed

2   for a specified time period before said destructive action is performed.

1   37.   The portable electronic device of claim 23 wherein said CPU permits a specified number of

2   tasks to be performed for a specified time period and, after either the specified number of tasks

3   have been performed or the specified time period has elapsed, said CPU performs said destructive

4   action.

1   38.   The portable electronic device of claim 23 wherein said decryption key cannot be

2   overwritten.

1   39.   The portable electronic device of claim 23 wherein said decryption key cannot be copied.

1   40.   A security station through which a user of a portable electronic device can initiate a

2   security response associated with the portable electronic device, comprising:

3   a CPU;

4   a registry of user information accessible by said CPU and including an identifier value

5   associated with the portable electronic device; and

6   a communication port to facilitate communication with the portable electronic device;

7   wherein said CPU generates a security message which is transmitted through the

8   communication port to the portable electronic device to cause the portable electronic device to

9   perform a destructive security action.

1   41.   The security station of claim 40 wherein said CPU digitally signs said security message

2   with a key associated with the user.

1 42. The security station of claim 41 wherein said CPU encrypts said security message with said

2 key.

1 43. The security station of claim 40 wherein said CPU encrypts said security message with a

2 key associated with the user.

1 44. The security station of claim 40 wherein said security message causes said portable

2 electronic device to erase its data storage.

1 45. The security station of claim 40 wherein said security message causes said portable

2 electronic device to cease transmitting data.

1 46. The security station of claim 40 wherein said security message causes said portable

2 electronic device to preclude access to any stored in the portable electronic device.

1 47. The security station of claim 40 wherein said security message causes said portable

2 electronic device to report location information to the security station.

1 48. The security station of claim 40 wherein said security message permits the portable

2 electronic device to perform a specified number of tasks after which the portable electronic device

3 performs said destructive action.

1   49.   The security station of claim 40 wherein said security message permits the portable

2   electronic device to perform tasks for a specified amount of time after which the portable

3   electronic device performs said destructive action.

1   50.   The security station of claim 40 wherein said security message permits the portable

2   electronic device to perform a specified number of tasks for a specified amount of time, and after

3   either the specified number of tasks have been performed or the specified amount of time has

4   expired, the portable electronic device performs said destructive action.

1   51.   The security station of claim 40 wherein the security message can be aborted by the

2   portable electronic device.